

# Cruising the Coast

By Angela Shultz

When Henry Ford put his Model T into mass production, it gave the average Joe a chance to hit the road, and America's love affair with the open road began. Some of our favorite roads even became famous—Route 66, the Pacific Coast Highway and, in South Carolina, Highway 17.



Variously known as Ocean Highway and Kings Highway, this asphalt ribbon traces the eastern edge of our state from the Savannah River to Little River, providing perhaps more interesting sites per mile than any other highway in the country. A drive down this road would entertain you for days. The first thing you'll notice as you coast into South Carolina from Georgia is that this is the Lowcountry. That means some stretches will have no sign of human occupation—just swaying marsh grass, meandering tidal creeks, blue skies and waterfowl. On other sections of Highway 17 ancient oaks line your path as you pass through towns that you'd literally miss if you had the chance to blink. On others, you'll find all the signs of modern life from putt-putt to caffè mocha grandes.

If you happen to be driving in the fresh fruit and vegetable season, be sure to stop at one of the roadside produce stands in the rural areas. Peaches, vine-ripened tomatoes, watermelon and sweet corn are a few of the fantastic flavors found here.

As you head north, you'll see a definite change in traffic as you reach Charleston. Highway 17 deposits you right in the middle of this historic beauty at an intersection known to locals as "The Crosstown." There's so much to see, hear,

Highway 17. Plan a stop along this stretch of highway to discover the famous sweetgrass baskets handmade by descendants of West African slaves who brought the craft to South Carolina. The skill and the accompanying lore are well worth the stop.

Cities become scarce as you head into the Francis Marion National Forest and the town of Awendaw with its true diamond in the rough—the SeeWee Restaurant. In this former grocery store, the walls (still covered in parts by grocery shelves) are stocked with supplies and every sort of doodad, photo or miscellaneous memorabilia. Aside from atmosphere, the place has some downright delicious food such as hushpuppies and a fried seafood platter accompanied by your choice of two outrageous side items like collard greens and fried green tomatoes. Then to top it all off, try a hefty slice of chocolate cake with peanut butter icing.

Just up the road is the charming city of McClellanville. The village dates back to the mid-1800s and is set along a great sweep of tidal creek and salt marsh, opening into the Intracoastal waterway. A favorite for straight-off-the-boat-fresh seafood is Carolina Seafood Market.



eat and do in Charleston that you may want to delay your Highway 17 venture for a few days. Just walking the historic waterfront and admiring the beautiful homes will take you days. And the food! A couple of can't-miss selections include the upscale Peninsula Grill on Market Street, with refined American-style fare and a spectacular wine selection, as well as Vickery's on Beaufain Street where you'll enjoy the Cuban/Lowcountry fusion flavors of this Charleston institution.

As you leave downtown Charleston by way of Highway 17, wave good-bye to the Holy City from atop the Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge. This beautiful structure is the longest cable-stayed bridge in North America and connects downtown Charleston to Mt. Pleasant. Just at the foot of the bridge lies Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum, home to the World War II aircraft carrier *USS Yorktown*, priceless war planes from World War II, Korea, Vietnam and Desert Storm, as well as modern marvels such as the F-14 Tomcat and S-3 Viking. Other attractions at Patriots Point include a Cold War Memorial, the new Congressional Medal of Honor Museum and more.

Once your history lesson concludes, continue north on

Just 20 miles north is the historic city of Georgetown. Founded in 1729, this city served as a port of entry for settlers and was a bustling place for the shipment of Carolina Gold rice. Today, the city has a charming Harborwalk with dining and shopping just steps from Winyah Bay. Kudzu Bakery is a delicious stop for baked treats and coffee.

If you're thinking that it's time to lay back and relax, head up the road to The Original Hammock Shop at Pawleys Island. It was 1898 when riverboat captain Joshua John Ward first made one of these cozy contraptions, and over 200 years later the hammocks are still handwoven and as comfy as ever. You'll see these beauties hanging from porches and trees all over South Carolina.

If you've timed your trip well, it might be time to eat again. Good news. You're just a few minutes from Murrells Inlet and some of the best seafood around. In this traditional fishing village, you'll find Drunken Jack's, Oliver's Lodge, Divine Fish House and more. Shrimp, oysters, flounder, crab cakes and she-crab soup. It makes you hungry just thinking about it.

Rested and well-fed, you're ready for the next big





adventure—Myrtle Beach. Vibrant and alive, this city has a reputation for fun with endless dining, shopping and entertainment opportunities. Visit Broadway at the Beach where you'll find over 100 specialty shops, 20 restaurants and more. Or check out the Myrtle Beach Pavilion Nostalgia Park which offers a collection of classic rides from the original Pavilion Amusement Park, a Myrtle Beach institution for 58 years. If you're looking for something a little more laid-back, stroll the sandy shores and take in a breathtaking sunset. No matter what angle you approach this town, you'll most surely come away pleased.

South Carolina spreads the excitement along Highway 17 right up to the last in-state stop at Little River. Behind you lies mile after mile of sunny beaches, great eating, beautiful scenery and fantastic shopping. It's no wonder that a trip along U.S. Highway 17 creates memories for a lifetime. Come see for yourself.



Find out more  
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Turn to page 106 in the "green pages" for more on Historic Charleston & Resort Beaches, page 114 for more on Lowcountry & Resort Islands, and page 119 for more on the Myrtle Beach Area/The Grand Strand.



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